The Phantom of the Opera

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/8979019.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	Gen, Multi, M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal Lecter Series - All Media Types, Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Hannibal Lecter & Will Graham, Alana Bloom & Margot Verger, Jack Crawford and Bella Crawford, Team Sassy Science - Relationship
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Tobias Budge, franklyn froidveaux, Iris Komeda, Jack Crawford, Beverly Katz, Jimmy Price, Brian Zeller, OCs, Margot Verger, Alana Bloom, team sassy science - Character, random FBI field agents, random party staff, random wait staff at diners/motels
Additional Tags:	Tosca - Freeform, trope, Slow Burn, additional murder to canon, Road Trip, play that bit of Grieg cos OMGG, definitley a tag, why aren't I studying?, Angst, More angst, Lots of Angst, Comfort, of a kind - Freeform, Fluff, More Fluff, Christmas Fluff, it's 3 am and I wrote five thousand words today, Merry Christmas, I've wrapped the presents now, my titles are rubbish, Sex, chapter 8 is sex, and not much else, but hey, Anal Sex, Rimming, Blow Job, Bottom!Will, top!Hannibal, that's how they rolled today, First Time, they made it count, Jack only a bit of an arse
Language:	English
Series:	Part 18 of The Dr Plushy Pants Collection
Stats:	Published: 2016-12-23 Completed: 2016-12-27 Words: 13,555 Chapters: 8/8

The Phantom of the Opera

by AtticusCrete

Summary

Fromage, plus non-canonical serial murderer, intimacy unfolding between Hannibal and Will. Team Sassy Science, Bev is The Best (TM by Victorine cos it's so good), Jack being Jack, a Hannibal Christmas party. Large amount of angst b4 the party and final chapter.

Welcome to the Dr Plushy Pants AU where there is humour, tenderness, familiar faces, different deaths (squee), and some angst, corresponding fluff, slow burn, and divergences. Watch for tags for each chapter/part. Canon adjacent. Maybe a second cousin twice removed - some events out of sequence.

It spans beyond the three seasons, and starts with 'a terrible name for a Museum', I've written bits from along the timeline. The ending of the whole series is already written. I'm currently going back to fill in the gaps.

And sorry about the titles, I'm rubbish at titles, and summaries, and notes, *shrugs* in my first four weeks of writing I clocked just under 100,000 words, what can I say? Feedback and friendliness gratefully received. I answer all comments, though it can take me a bit of time.

In real life I'm an archaeologist, and have other things I'm supposed to write and read. But I'm always delighted to hang out here...

Notes

Ch 8 has the smut, and is NSFW, unless it's that kind of party? I mean job.

Sing once again with me

Hannibal feels uncharacteristically nervous. For the first time in his adult life he is finding it difficult to let himself go and sink into the glorious music of Tosca.

He knows it is all down to the fact that Will is sitting beside him, eyes closed, hands resting on his thighs palm down. He is breathing calmly and slowly. Hannibal doesn't think he'ds ever seen Will so at peace. Even when he was asleep. It is strangely touching. He knows Will is endlessly submerged in the feelings and thoughts of others, constantly filtering data, and sometimes trying to locate himself in the whirlwind of other people's behaviours and words.

Hannibal steals a glance several times before the intermission. He wonders if he should encourage Will to stay in the audiotorium during the twenty minute break. It could be very noisy and overwhelming. He looks again at Will as everyone applauds the end of the first act. Will smiles before opening his eyes again, then grasps Hannibal's hand and squeezes briefly.

'Lovely. I like the soprano, she's a little soft round her natural break but that'll come. Is it her first major role?'

Hannibal looks in utter surprise at Will.

'What? I told you I loved opera. Did you think I was making it up? Did you order interval drinks? If not, I did, did you?

'Yes'

'Ok, what did you ask for?'

'Champagne cocktails' Hannibal says faintly.

'Excellent, me too. At least we're not mixing anything. Will you be ok to drive later?'

'Yes, I think so' Hannibal follows Will up the aisle into the foyer and then across to the bar and lounge.

'Will you get the drinks whilst I use the bathroom?' Hannibal nods.

Hannibal goes up to the bar and asks for the two orders. The barman produces a small tray and sets the four cocktails on it.

'Is Professor Graham here?' The barman politely enquires as he hands Hannibal the tray.

'Professor?'

'Yeah, ok Dr Graham really, but he's a professor too isn't he? If he was at a University he'd be a professor. We like to give him the title as a courtesy.'

'Yes, he should be here in a moment. Why, if I may ask?'

'He leant me a book last time he was here and I've finished it so I'm returning it, he usually goes to DC but he's got a season here so we see him quite a lot. He's a nice guy'

'Yes. Yes he is' Hannibal feels slightly unmoored. In his mind Will is eternally socially adrift. Apart from his work friends. But maybe not always? Their interactions whilst a mixture of intellectual vigour and more occasionally the simmering edge of passion have always been captivating. And really, if he thinks about it Will gets on well with Beverly Katz, and Alana, and Jimmy Price and Zeller, and almost everyone he comes into contact with socially. Bella Crawford speaks very warmly of him too.

Hannibal is faced with the need for a quick re-assessment. Will is fine with people who just let him be. He tends to fit in too well if anything. His capacity to reflect those he is around to an extraordinary degree is what had first fascinated and then captivated Hannibal. But he realises Will tends to get in trouble during exposure to violent extremes. In the normal day to day, he is mostly fine. It may have taken him six months to realise this. But it's true. Hannibal looks back at the barman and smiles at him, he realises he is still not quite holding the tray 'yes, oh I'm so Sorry, I apologise for being so rude, thank you'.

The barman grins and then goes to serve another patron. Hannibal takes the tray over to a side table and sets it down. He takes a glass and downs it rather quickly. He catches himself and starts the second much slower. As he does so he sees Iris Komeda heading towards him, a determined expression on her face. He sighs inwardly just slightly. Really he quite likes Iris. In small doses.

Will enters the lounge and sees Hannibal talking in an animated fashion with a woman with a sharp bob and a striking red dress. He sees that his favourite barman is on duty and he makes his way over.

'Hey, Tim, how's it going, did Dr Lecter collect our drinks?'

'He did, sir, and here's your book'

'Great' replies Will. 'I was just thinking of it the other day but I thought I'd see you this weekend'

'You're usually in on a Friday, I'm surprised to see you tonight'

'Yeah, change this month, I wanted to come with a friend' Will gestures to Hannibal who is now in conversation with the red dress woman and a bearded man, younger, shorter, and rounder than either of the other two.

He glances back at Tim and smiles vaguely at the man who has come to stand beside him at the counter. The impeccably dressed African American man smiles faintly back, more a press of the lips than anything else as he asks

'do you know the good doctor then?'

'Sure, we sometimes work together, do you know him?'

'I know of him'

Will looks at him again 'Did you come with the person talking to Hannibal'

'Yes. He is a friend too'

Will waits but the man doesn't seem to have anything more to say, until

'My name's Tobias Budge, I own the music shop in downtown'

Ah, right. I know it, great, you've got a great reputation, do you do restringing? Piano? It's a bit out of tune, I moved it here fairly recently and haven't got round to getting it sorted' Will has to make a conscious effort to slow down.

'Of course. Do you have a card?'

Will pulls out one of his FBI cards and writes his personal cell number on the back, he hands it over.

'You work for the FBI' it is a statement rather than a question.

Will just smiles. This could turn into one of the conversations he doesn't like having with members of the public.

To change the subject he says 'Maybe we should both rescue our friends?'

Tobias looks at him and does his funny smile again 'Yes. Who are we really rescuing though?'

Will looks at him in surprise. He can't quite get a handle on this. He smiles a goodbye to Tim, polishing glasses behind the bar

Hannibal hands Will his drink 'I seem to have had your first as well as my own first and second'

Will looks at Hannibal sharply. His comment rings off note. It sounds very unlike him, he sounds either nervous or unsettled in some way

'Not to worry. Though maybe we'll get a cab, or you'll let me drive? See how you feel later'

Will smiles at Hannibal, making eye contact, as he takes the proffered glass. Hannibal looks just faintly strained. Will turns his attention to the woman and the bearded man. Keeping one hand in the small of Hannibal's back. Just lightly. For Hannibal it's like an electric shock. Will glances at him again. Alright then.

'Nice to meet you. I'm a friend of Hannibal's, Will Graham' he shakes hands with both of them the woman smiling slightly archly, the man looking faintly scandalised. From the woman Will picks up a wave of interest. From the man Will is surprised to feel a strong rush of intense envy and a tang of fear. He wants to allay that, but can't pinpoint the reason for it. To do with Hannibal or Tobias? Either way, Will decides it is prudent to step back from whatever is going on here and removes himself emotionally.

The bell for the end of the intermission goes and Will smiles all round and swiftly drinks the remainder of his cocktail.

As he and Hannibal walked back to their seats Hannibal asks

'If I hadn't asked you yesterday would you have come to this performance anyway?

'Yes actually. I had a seat for last night, don't worry I gave it to someone. I've a season ticket'

'I'm surprised then that we've never encountered one another here before'

Will shrugs, 'I usually just sit in a corner and read the libretto or programme notes, or I chat to the bar staff if they're not too busy. Sometimes I just stay in my seat. It can depend on what the day has been like'. He scrunches up his nose. 'It was a good day today, so I can manage the whole social bit' he smiles at Hannibal and as they are taking their seats again he picks up Hannibal's nearest hand and laces their fingers together on the armrest between their two seats. He settles in for the second part.

Hannibal looks down at their linked hands and thinks he can't remember a moment of such indescribable pleasure, in public at least, for many years.

Is not inside my mind

Chapter Summary

It's the second intermission ...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

During the second act the lead soprano sings the 'vissi d'arte', it is Will's favourite aria in the whole opera. He knew he'd cry. He always does when ever he hears it. He palms his eyes with the back of his sleeve. Hannibal faintly squeezes his hand, moved by the sight of Will so moved, as much as by the music.

Hannibal knows he is in trouble. All he wants is right in front of him. And they seem to lurch from drunken fumbling to angst ridden encounters in the wake of unspeakable horrors. He is aching from seeing Will but not being able to possess him fully. This has been going on for months! And they've got so close before. He can trace his infatuation back to the opening evening of the 'evil minds museum', and what a dreadful name for a Museum that is. So crass.

He distracts himself by spending a few moments pondering the nature of good and evil and the correlation between Judaeo-Christian concepts of life and afterlife and how these both consolidate and adversely impact each other.

But this is only a momentary distraction. The second intermission is approaching. Hannibal desperately wants to say something so that Will might understand that this is more than a dalliance for him. He previously thought it likely that Will either rejected relationships outright as being too, too, too loud in his own head, or that he only had relationships after careful consideration and a gradual build up of intimacy. But they've done that. It's built as solidly as, Hannibal can't think of an example. And they seem to be stuck.

Or. Hannibal realises after the evening's revelations to date that it is just possible that what he does know of Will and his romantic relationships is not entirely accurate, or at least incomplete. He is an endless source of surprise and unpredictability. Maybe, he would discover that Will prefers brief casual hook ups that are all about sex and no strings attached. The experience without any investment. Hannibal desperately hopes not, but at this point he is willing to give Will anything. Just to be with him, properly, permanently, preferably, but really, in any way.

As the second act comes to an end he realises his phone is vibrating noiselessly in his pocket. He pulls it out just as the audience begin to applaud. Will lets go of his hand to join in and Hannibal is able to open his phone and look at the text. It is from Beverly Katz.

'Hannibal, I know you're at the opera with Will (good job btw, the team would usually be taking bets and saying good luck :-p)' Hannibal smiles and shudders at the same time 'make Will turn off his phone right now (if he hasn't already, it being the opera and all) not just to silent vibrate but off completely do it now'

Without questioning the wisdom of Beverly's request he turns to Will

'have you your phone? May I borrow it for a moment?'

'Sure, here you go. I'm going to the bathroom, again. Sorry. Too much information. See you in the lobby?'

'Yes of course'

'the code is 25/12/1642 ok?'

'Yes, thank you' Hannibal switches Will's phone off. Using his own phone he calls Beverly

'Have you done it?' She says before Hannibal has spoken

'Yes, and I have it here, Beverly what's happening? Why have I kidnapped Will's phone?' Bev snorts, she liked Dr Plushy Pants 'There's been another of the tarot killer drops. Jack is almost certainly going to call Will. I know he tried him at home and got the answering service. He's talking about sending a car for him just in case he's at home and just not answering. He does that sometimes. Not answer. You probably know that.' 'Yes, we have an agreed pattern of rings so he'll pick up'. 'Thought so.

So, where are you in the opera? Second interval or so? Must be if you're talking and not texting. Ok. Ok. Hannibal. I'm so sorry but it's not going to happen tonight. I'm pretty solid but if Jack asks Jimmy he'll crumble and tell Jack where you are. I think you can probably expect an FBI SUV at the front doors within the hour, maybe 80 minutes. There's no point in running, Jack knows where you live'

'Beverly I'm not an international criminal serial killer mastermind!'

'I know. Actually you'd probably see more of Will if you were. Will you tell him about Jack? Jack might want you to come too, actually that could work out right? Shall I ask Jack, once Jimmy has capitulated I could sort of remember that you're at the opera too?'

'Go right ahead Beverly, this evening can only be improved by a tarot wielding serial killer, I'll see you soon no doubt' he shuts off the call and smiles at the little knot of people standing nearby. They eye him warily.

Will comes up to him, and laughs, 'oh your face, the worst hasn't happened! We've seen almost the whole of one of my favourite operas. We're near a bar. And no one has died tonight. And Jack hasn't called. And we're both here. You know, together!' He leans in and kisses Hannibal on the cheek. 'I'm getting another drink, someone had one of mine earlier! Do you want something? Let me get something, and I'll tell you why I like opera, with my crass southern upbringing and all'.

'Will, you're right about the evening, except the bit about no one dying' Hannibal looks at him seriously. The little knot of people now look all ears so Hannibal steers Will away. 'Beverly texted me. She told me to turn off your phone. Despite this she thinks Jack will probably locate you in the next 90 minutes. It's the tarot killer. I am more sorry than I know how to say.'

'Oh Hannibal. Oh. Oh. Oh bugger' Will continues to swear quietly and imaginatively for a minute. He looks down at the floor shaking his head. Hannibal is rather gratified by the fervour underpinning Will's words and actions. Whatever Will feels, he feels perhaps as strongly as he does. He continues 'Beverly is going to suggest to Jack, once she conveniently remembers that we are at the opera together, that I come with you. Would that be acceptable? I, I don't really want to be parted from you tonight'

Will looks up at him 'of course you're coming. Of course. I don't want to leave you either. Let me get that drink. I guess neither of us is driving?' Hannibal just looks at him, 'yeah they'll send a car or something. Come on, drink, just not enough that I'll be drunk in charge of a crime scene, and then we'll get to see the final act of my favourite bloody opera. Will you hang on to my phone so that I don't turn it back on in a fit of pointless guilt?'

Wordlessly Hannibal pats his jacket pocket that Will's phone is in.

Chapter End Notes

Well done for getting this far! You may realise that this series is gradually filling out to be a full AU of season one and maybe beyond... its evolving. It's my second week writing fan fic, please bare with the unevenness...

You'll bring your love to me

Chapter Summary

> Will and Hannibal travel to the scene of the Tarot Killer, constantly aware of each other and of what is unfolding

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The FBI agent who drives the SUV is quiet and restrained, and has made no comment beyond the fact that there are jackets and gloves in the back for when they get to the scene. Oh and some gum boots. 'That's going to look good with the tux' Hannibal smiles at Will. Sartorial excellence is not at the top of his list of concerns for the evening.

'Tell me about your connection to opera. It will be a good distraction and take our minds off what lies ahead.'

'And, what might have been ahead if we hadn't been basically abducted by the FBI. Again?'

'Well. Yes. That too'

'You didn't leave anything in the oven did you?'

'No, though I fear that the dessert will not survive"

'Never mind. We can try and get something later, I know it won't be as good, but you know?'

'Yes. I'm glad you knew I was talking about supper.' He smirks very very slightly, Will manages an eye roll. What ever else Jack could steal from them it didn't include their shared moments of humour and understanding.

'I know your priorities'

'some of them. So, Opera?'

'Ok. You know I moved around a lot when I was a kid? But I did get to see my grandmaw fairly often. We'd usually roll up there once a month or so. It was my ma's mother. I think my dad hoped maybe to keep the connection alive. He thought it mattered, even if he was poor at the whole family thing himself.

Hannibal thought of his own family. And the tangled threads that consists of, he still hasn't told Will about Mischa. He's been trying to for over a month.

Will catches a look of pain on Hannibal's face, so he carries on

'My grandmaw had this kind of Reader's Digest subscription. Each month she'd get sent a classical record - opera, ballet, concertos you know? Mostly famous pieces, nothing too complex, just enough to either whet your appetite or completely sate you depending on what kind of person you were. She kept the sub going for three years. So I grew up with those 36 records playing constantly in the background whenever I saw her.

'There was one year when dad got some seasonal work on a site but I couldn't go - there was tied accommodation and no room for a kid, so I stayed with her for a month, my sibs went to a cousin, but I was the weird one so Grandmaw got me. We listened to those records all the time. I've still got 19 of them. I only have to catch something on the radio and it'll make me think of her, and of what we were doing when we listened to it. I can't listen to some pieces without having to pull over in the car if I'm driving and listening to the radio.'

'Has that happened when you've been in the car or at home with me?' Hannibal looks over at him

'Yeah. That piece by Grieg? From Peer Gynt? Suite 1?'

Hannibal thinks for a moment. He knows it. He'd had it on in the car when he and Will drove back together after... better not to think of it 'What does it remind you of?'

'We had it at my Grandmaw's funeral. It was a good service. Lot of good memories there. She and I used to sit on the porch with a jar full of fireflies. She'd let them go and this record would be playing in the house. The house had wood floors so nothing much absorbed the sound. It just floated cleanly.' Will is quiet.

Hannibal reaches between them on the back seat, not caring if the agent can see, and takes Will's hand. He gently rubs Wills fingers. Connecting them. He hopes Will feels the little spark of current running between them. Like a low electric thrum.

They are quiet for the next 10 miles or so. The road slipping away like the night. The agent driving well and just this side of too fast. They have another 30 miles or so to go. Hannibal is trying not to do the maths. This time with Will isn't what he'd expected, but it is rich, in its own way. He's learnt to value every good moment together.

'It's probably going to be bad later. I might be bad later.' Will speaks low, and isn't looking at him, but Hannibal understands what it means.

'What ever else that may be hanging over you Will, be assured that my only concern here is that you are alright. I'd be glad if the first time doesn't haunt us because of associated memories or experiences.'

Will does look at him then 'thank you'. He takes a very deep breath and lets it out. 'I do want there to be a first time. I'd like it not to be the last time either'.

Hannibal swallows. Will watches his Adam's apple move up and down in his throat. He wants to bite it. They'll both have to wait.

Chapter End Notes

Team Sassy Science back in the next chapter!

For love is blind

Chapter Summary

A sad and hurtful episode where Hannibal and Will both get it badly wrong. Not a cheery pre Christmas run up.

Chapter Notes

If you want fluffy, this isn't it. If I can get the next three chapters up in the next 24 hours there will be fluff. At the moment though. This is angst angst angsty angst. Even team Sassy Science are reduced to angst.

So late that night it was morning Jack shepherds Will back into the SUV he and Hannibal had arrived in. Will is shaking, almost incoherent. Hannibal hasn't seen him as bad as this since he shot Garrett Jacob Hobbs, or possibly since what he and Will call the Lady in the Lake incident.

'Can you do something with him? We've still got to look at the other scene and go back to the lab?'

'Jack. I'm not sure. This might be beyond both my and Will's capacity this evening.'

'Just try, alright?'

Hannibal looks after Jack's retreating back and pulls Will into a loose embrace. Will just slumps into him, clutching at the lapel of Hannibal's tux jacket.

'I can't. I can't. It was so bad' Hannibal can see tears welling at the corner of Will's eyes. They start to fall, he looks both broken and beautiful. Hannibal swallows down the fury he feels at seeing Will demolished in this way.

'Will it help to speak or to stay silent? I can offer you both.'

'You're going to ask me to look aren't you? Please don't make me look' Will's voice drops low.

Hannibal pulls him closer 'of course I won't make you. I would never make you do something you were not equal to..' he feels Will sob quietly for a moment and then feels him stiffen just slightly in the circle of his arms,

'What does that mean? Not equal to?'

Hannibal realises he has made made some error but is not quite sure in what way 'I simply mean that I would never try to force you to do something'

'But you wouldn't stop me either? Would you?'

'I think, that whilst that might be effective in the short term, in the long term it would have a disastrous impact on us as a couple' even as he speaks Hannibal knows he sounds too stiff and formal. That he should let his heart rule him in this. Will might not want to be stopped, but he wants Hannibal to want to.

'I shouldn't have wanted you to come' Will pulls away. 'It's always worse if I'm vulnerable in some way. I should have realised this was a mistake. God I'm an idiot.' Will stands separately from Hannibal and looks over to where Beverly is standing with Jimmy next to their evidence van.

'I'm going to go and talk to Bev, I'll get them to take me to the next scene. You can. You can do whatever you think is best.'

'Will! Please!'

'Just. Just leave it Hannibal. I. I'll. I don't know.'

He walks away across the parking zone to Beverly. He stands beside her looking beyond her, away from Hannibal, Beverly looks towards Hannibal, both of them almost frozen. She looks at Will again and nods. He gets into the van. She looks back at Hannibal and offers a sort of apologetic gesture with her hands. They are friends, he will understand. She hopes.

She walks round and gets into the van and drives it away.

All Hannibal can do is wait for the agent who drove the SUV to return. By the time he arrives at the next scene it has all gone to hell.

As he gets out of the vehicle he sees Jack heading over towards him, ahead he can see Bev kneeling on the ground next to someone lying prostrate on the earth.

'What the hell Hannibal? You're supposed to keep him upright. He's of no use to us if he can't even stand up'

A cold hand grips Hannibal's heart 'is that Will, what happened, how did this happen, Jack, this is outrageous'

'What's outrageous is that you didn't do your job here. Too busy missing out on a date? You're supposed to keep an eye on him, not fuck him.'

'That's not worthy of you Jack, and is uncalled for'

Jack hesitates, 'yeah. Alright. Sorry. Bit below the belt. Alright. But we need him, and we need him on top of this, we're losing too many bodies, he's got to get in the game if we're going to save...

Hannibal interrupts 'I don't really care about saving the anonymous mass of potential victims, I care more about saving Will'

'Yeah? From who? himself?'

'Possibly. And possibly from you too.' Hannibal starts to walk towards Beverly and Will but Jack moves to intercept him.

'Yeah? We'll just have to see about that. They're going to take Will to the local field office, go with Bev and Jimmy back to the hotel. We'll try and sort this mess out in the morning.'

.....

The next day Hannibal comes downstairs to the breakfast room of the hotel. He is wearing a borrowed jumper and some trousers from the locker in the evidence van. He is angry, uncomfortable and feels out of sorts. And deathly tired. He texted Will three times during the night, but has had no response. He can see Bev, Jimmy and Zeller sitting at one of the booths and he hesitates for a moment not entirely sure he'll be welcome. Zeller waves him over.

Bev pulls him onto the bench beside her and then uncharacteristically lays her head on his shoulder. He jerks slightly in surprise and cautiously puts an arm around her and squeezes. She smiles and sits up and he brings his arm back around. He orders coffee and two boiled eggs and wheat toast from the server.

'Boiled eggs?'

'I find they are the simplest thing on the menu and usually the most likely to be recognisable. Though I have on occasion been surprised' the three science team members laugh, and everyone relaxes, surprised by the tension that had been holding them in place.

Hannibal stirs his coffee and cracks open the two eggs he is brought. He isn't quite sure how to begin

'You're going to come with us back to the lab. We'll get you a car there to take you back to Baltimore' Hannibal nods, he has patients this evening, he hopes he'll be back in time to change and get to the office. 'What about Jack and Will, are they not here?'

Zeller starts to say something and Jimmy clearly kicks him, and smiles at Hannibal. 'Will probably didn't want to wake you with a text. He and Jack have had to go back to Baltimore, there's been an incident at the symphony. Someone turned one of their trombonists into a cello' Hannibal just looks at Jimmy, for once, rendered speechless.

...

The journey is mostly quiet. Hannibal sits up front whilst Beverly drives. She always does she explains. The team is friendly and include him and he is impossibly grateful for the solicitude they show. None of them make light of whatever he might be feeling, but nor do they intrude.

As they get closer to Quantico, Bev pulls off the road onto the side. She glances at her colleagues in the back

'Hannibal, I get to say this because I know you best of us three. We know this is awful. We will help whatever way we can. Will will almost certainly already hate himself right now. And be conflicted because he will think it just proves he can't make something work even when someone really loves him, and he straight loves them back,' she glanced at Jimmy and pointed at him 'don't!'

'What! I was just going to',

'I know what you were going to say. Not now'

Jimmy grumbles. He'd had an excellent pun up his sleeve. He loves puns. So does Hannibal. Ok maybe this isn't quite the right moment.

Hannibal looks at her and then looks at the other two in the rear-view mirror. He is so transparent. It hurts. But he is also comforted. Here are three people on the inside with him. That is almost unprecedented in his life.

'I am grateful. Thank you.'

...

He arrives home later in the afternoon and after showering and changing he hangs up his tuxedo to take to the cleaners and puts his shirt into the laundry. He looks at his phone. Nothing from Will. He closes his eyes. Not sure how he will get through his evening appointments.

The phantom of the opera

Chapter Summary

Hannibal meets Tobias Budge again. It doesn't go well, but Franklyn doesn't die. Yay Franklyn. Poor sap.

Also, more angst. Sorry.

Chapter Notes

Still more angstyness, it'll be all light hearted and fluffy (yeah right, which fandom is this again?) jolly soon.

In the audiotorium of the Baltimore Symphony Hall Will is looking out across the ranks of seating. He feels eyes on him. Garrett Jacob Hobbs is sitting in the front row clapping laconically. Will shakes his head. He is getting a migraine and the lack of sleep and whatever the fuck Happened with Hannibal has utterly thrown him.

Just before he blacked out the night before he realises that Hannibal had spoken of them as a couple. It both exhilarates him and terrifies him. And confronted with an array of corpses tied into the tarot killer it had felled him where he stood. He has royally fucked everything up. He always does. Hannibal had looked devastated when Will had left him. Oh god. He is so tired. And so done with fucking it up every time.

He looks again at the corpse, something is nagging at him. He can't quite get it, his head is hurting too much, and damn Hobbs. And Jack. He could sense Jack hovering in the wings. He spins round and asks one of the techs. 'is there a bow anywhere, could he actually have played this?'

After half an hour of humming and haa-ing and a certain amount of anxiety on the part of the Symphony Director Will finally gets a bow and is able to get it across the man's exposed and hardened vocal chords. He gets a sound out of it. If he could play the cello it might even be possible to get a tune. Even Jack could see that they couldn't ask the Company cellist to try.

As they left the building to the crime scene team Will mentions the man he'd met (God, only two days ago) at the opera. He owns a string store. If nothing else they should check. Jack is pretty much in agreement, trusting that Will is back on course. They take two other agents and head downtown to Budge's shop.

The owner isn't there. But a quick check through the open parts of the shop suggest it will be worth tracking him down. Jack phones through to get a search warrant. As they wait Will thinks briefly of Tobias and the strange interaction there had been between him, Hannibal and Hannibal's patient Franklyn. Will hasn't asked Hannibal for any information about Franklyn, beyond confirming that he is a patient; he is mostly very good at keeping boundaries in place. Probably essential in his line of work.

Will wishes that everything he thinks about doesn't bring him back to Hannibal. It feels like he is inevitable. Will so wants him to be inevitable. Longs for it. He gets out his cell phone and re-reads Hannibal's text messages. And he hasn't replied. God he is being so rude.

And he really likes Hannibal. That's not right though is it? Will loves him, more than just a little. He finds Hannibal's office number and it starts to ring through. After five rings it switches to the answering service. Hannibal probably has a patient. Will doesn't have his own 'appointment' for another three days, but it wouldn't be unusual for Hannibal to have patients today despite the events of the weekend.

...

Hannibal's final patient of the evening is Franklyn Froidveaux. He neatly steers Franklyn round the many obstacles in his life. They are currently discussing the possibility of there being no lion in the room when there is a knock on the door. Both Hannibal and Franklyn look up in surprise. Hannibal stands, but the door opens. Franklyn's friend Tobias stands there.

'Did you tell him Franklyn?'

'No' Franklyn squeaks in fear,

'I don't believe you. I didn't mean to kill you today, I've been looking forwards to it, but needs must. Come here.'

Hannibal bodily grabs Franklyn and threws him into the corner of the office where there is a recessed door. He pulls it open and pushes Franklyn in and slams the door.

'Call the police Franklyn, the door's on a timer. Your friend can't open it' Hannibal speaks loudly but he isn't shouting. Shouting usually escalates and if he can he wants to talk Tobias down. Tobias doesn't look ready to be talked down. He looks unhinged.

He pulls some wire from his pocket and Hannibal jumps back as Tobias swings it at him. Whipping through the air. They dance round the furniture in the central part of the office and Hannibal gets caught by the forearm the wires acting as a kind of bolas.

Hannibal is fit, healthy, and reasonably strong, but he is also older than Tobias and is wrung about by the experiences of the last few days. This isn't going well. Hannibal has a gun in his safe but he knows he doesn't have time to retrieve it. He grabs a letter opener from his desk as he skirts round it keeping the furniture between him and Tobias. He's miscalculated though as Tobias jumps onto the desk and then straight down on top of Hannibal.

Outside Hannibal can hear sirens, and hopes that Franklyn has been coherent enough to bring the right services to the door. As he and Tobias grapple on the floor, Tobias trying to get the wire round his neck Hannibal tries to get enough space to stab at him. Instead he gets a jab to his own thigh. He connects wildly with Tobias' neck, but the letter opener glanceds off Tobias' collar bone. At that point Jack Crawford barrells in, and promptly shoots Tobias.

Hannibal rolls out from under Budge who lies sweating and bleeding on the floor. There is no arterial spray and the emergency team get his bleeding under control quickly. Hannibal limps to his desk chair and sits on it.

'How are you here Jack?' he says at the very end of his tether 'what has happened?'

'We went to Budge's shop. After we got a warrant it was clear there was enough evidence to arrest him in connection with the cellist murder. He left a sort of diary. Will looked through it and realised he might come after Franklyn or you. And here we are, what's this all about doctor?'

'He said he wanted to kill Franklyn, I'm afraid I shoved him in the panic room, you can get him out now, I'll give you the code. He attacked me. I don't really know why. We met him just a few days ago at the opera.'

'And you hadn't met him before then?'

At that point Will walks in and sees Hannibal sitting bowed and bloodied.

Hannibal faintly says 'I thought it was just a case of a bad choice of friends', he closes his eyes. He feels faint and a little nauseous.

Will feels as though he's been struck, does Hannibal mean him too? He ignores Jack and comes and crouches in front of where Hannibal is sitting 'we heard the call out on the radio as we were coming over, I was worried you were dead. I feel responsible. Like I've dragged you into something'

'I got here on my own.'

One of the emergency crew comes over

'Dr Lecter? We'd like to take a look at you now. Can you come with us?' Hannibal stands.

As Will gets up too it is only then that he realises that Hannibal is bleeding from his ear, his arm, and his leg. There is a torn patch in his trousers, and the arm of his jacket has been almost cut in two by something. 'Hannibal, shit you're hurt! Do you want me to come? Keep you company?' He lays a hand on Hannibal's uninjured arm,

Hannibal doesn't look at him. 'It's kind of you to offer. I think I am better alone'.

Will wants to grab him, shake him, kiss him, shout at him.

He lets him go.

The voice which calls to me

Chapter Summary

The team try and tie up the Tarot killer case. They just want to go to a nice Christmas party. Beverly wants Will and Hannibal to work it out. Good luck with that Bev.

Chapter Notes

But more angst. Moving in the right direction though... maybe

Two days after the events at Hannibal's office Will gets a short text from Hannibal apologising but he is going to have to cancel their appointment. Will rings back straight away but Hannibal's cell is switched to the answering service. He tries him at home with no reply. He tries the office, with no reply.

The evening of his appointment he drives to Hannibal's home, but it looks shuttered and dark. No lights, even from the third floor. Sitting outside the house, in his car, he calls Beverly.

'Hi Will' she says, brightly 'how are you, what's happening?' In the background the voices he thought he could hear when she answered have shut off, either because she's closed a door or because they stop talking when she says his name. He tries not to feel paranoid, but fails. His head is hurting desperately again.

'Nothing much. Bev, listen, I just wondered if you or Alana have spoken to Hannibal. Is he ok? He's not answering my calls, and he cancelled my appointment too. I can't seem to find him'

'I think he's ok. He was a bit shaken by what happened with the Budge bloke. And his patient is debating whether to sue.'

'What?! Didn't Hannibal save his life'

'Yeah, but people do and say stupid things when they're scared...' she stops for a beat 'sorry, I didn't mean...'

'What didn't you mean? Bev, do you think I was stupid. That's not entirely fair you know? Hannibal shouldn't have....'

'What? Shouldn't have what? Cared? Tried to love you? Tried to stop Jack? Tried to be there? What shouldn't he have done? Really Will, I don't know...'

Will has never had Beverly be cross with him before. He hadn't known she could be. Not like this. This is terrible.

'Beverly, I'm sorry. I'm really very sorry. I want to make it right with Hannibal. I don't really know how to. I don't know what to do.

She takes pity on him, unbending slightly 'Ok, I'll tell him.'

'Bev, thank you. Sorry to you too'

'Yeah. Alright. Me as well. I'll see you tomorrow. We've got some more evidence to go through, Jack's going to call you. And probably Hannibal too, just so you're prepared for that.'

They end the call.

Bev turns and looks at Hannibal and Alana sitting on her lumpy sofa Vlad.

'Could you hear that?'

Hannibal nods minutely. He will have to make a decision about the following day if Jack calls him. He puts his hands over his face, hiding his eyes. Beverly looks over him at Alana who shakes her head slightly.

...

Will is due into the lab for 9:00, he cant decide if Hannibal is more likely to be there before he is due in or after. He'd opts for earlier so he can cover both bases. He is in at 6:00 and there is no one there.

By the time 9:00 had rolled around he's come up with some ideas to pursue when the others arrive. He's so lost in the case he has almost forgotten about trying to ambush Hannibal.

...

Two hours later Zeller looks down at the autopsy on the table. The victim is part of this series they are only just starting to put together.

It involves tarot cards and some weird astrological thing. Nothing as helpful as actual cards, just allegory and symbolism and general fucked up weirdness. Will fainted at the most recent scene.

They'd all been bothered by it, in part because the victims are younger and in part. Well. It is just all a bit fucked up. Jimmy is in the back of the lab comparing some pollen samples. He likes pollen it is definite. Zeller is waiting on some serology results, he'd thought that the symbolism might all be stage dressing and there is some kind of other thing going on. God it must be rubbing off from Will. He should be looking for the data not the feely weely rotten to

the core horror of one sick bastard. Bev is siting at the computer consul bringing up different screens looking for something, anything. They all want this one to be done.

Will has come up with some ideas early in the morning. He is now looking a bit flaked out but they are keeping going. Truthfully they don't just want to sort it because it is horrible. At the back of their minds they all want to be able to go to Hannibal's Christmas party in ten days time. At the rate the bodies are dropping and their total failure to get a handle on it, they are beginning to worry they might miss it. Bev had confirmed the party is definitely happening, she'd asked Hannibal especially. Zeller suspected she might have had to work hard to be tactful. Beverly could be very single minded about parties.

Jack has already roared at them for being slow about the case. Jimmy had nearly cried when he thought they might miss the party. He's got a new bow tie and everything. Originally they thought they might have been asked because of Will. Even thought they see a lot of Hannibal, have socialised with him even. But Will and Hannibal have had this almighty melt down. Zeller sighs, Will can be all over the place but he's also one of the best friends Brian has ever had, and nobody likes the kicked puppy look both he and the doctor are going around with.

Bev spoke to Will last night. The situation with Hannibal doesn't look any closer to being resolved. She'd asked again specifically about the party this morning. Will had been quite mild about it, and just reminded Bev that if she hadn't RSVPd she must as the catering is a bit of a nightmare. "Hannibal, actually decided he'd have to get a dedicated door man this time and valet parking! Apparently the Baltimore philharmonic orchestra tried to gate crash en masse last year."

Bev doesn't ask when he'd got this information from Hannibal. She knows she's seen him more recently than Will. But she appreciates that he is trying to be normal about it. As though he is working to the premise that if he just behaves as though everything will be ok, somehow it will be. She'd anticipates that Hannibal will come into the lab today. But in the afternoon when Jack is growling around he'd mentions that he'd talked to the doctor on the phone instead. Will just looked at the floor. Bev can't decide what tack to take.

Late that evening Zeller gets a breakthrough. All the victims had the same blood grouping. Not one of the really rare ones but not the biggest either - maybe a blood donation programme link.. they put everything in for analysis.

And wait. It isn't like the movies where analysis comes back in a few hours. They all get on with other bits of work, the cellist killer, Hobbs, Stammetts, there is always busy work to keep them occupied. Jack is deposed in court. Beverly goes as an expert witness. Will interviews Tobias Budge in the hospital. He is out of The ICU but handcuffed to the bed and very truculent. Will can't get much out of him. Jack doesn't have much better luck.

Will goes back to his academy class and teaches the last few sessions of the semester. He has coffee with Alana. He goes to a movie with Zeller and Jimmy. He takes the dogs for walks. He makes comfort food. He drinks slightly too much scotch one evening and miserably jerks himself off thinking only of Hannibal. He cries. Hannibal cancells their next appointment. By text. He cries again. He begins to wonder if he might not go to the party. He doesn't want to make a scene. But maybe not going would be even worse. He dithers. And cries again.

.....

When the DNA results come back they are astonished. All the victims are related - all of them. Six hours later Jack is interrogating a rather small and angry man who it turns out had been the sperm donor behind all the victims' conception and existence. He'd wanted them to be his family, and they hadn't. It was very straight forward in his own mind. Zeller is right, the tarot stuff was all window dressing.

A job well done (although way too slow everyone!) Jack sends them all home, to take a few days, and because he doesn't want to see them again until either the party or after Christmas.

And speaks my name

Chapter Summary

Hannibal's Christmas party. Where, just for once, it all goes right.

Chapter Notes

Fluff. Christmas fluff. Fluffy fluff. And a Christmas party of epic proportions. Cameo appearances by Frederick Chilton and Margot Verger.

The evening of the party Jimmy and Zeller arrive together to pick Beverly up from her apartment. They are all looking especially good. When they arrive at Hannibal's Baltimore house they nudge each other on the doorstep pretending to look like proper grown up guests and not the 10th graders they guess they might be. The promised doorman usheres them in, relieves them of coats and gifts and directs them into the main rooms of the house.

Of the three of them only Bev had been to Hannibal's house before. And even then just to the door to collect Will. 'Shit' says Zeller 'this isn't a house it's a fucking mansion, museum thing' Jimmy sighs 'that's a proper string quartet isn't it' they all look at each other. A grin slowly spreads on their faces. This is a proper Hannibal Lecter party, and they are at it. 'Did you bring your FBI ID' 'no, why?' 'Could be useful!' 'What?'

Beverly wants to look for Will. She'd seen him yesterday and he'd said he would probably come, but that he also hadn't spoken to Hannibal for almost two weeks. He'd cried on her shoulder when she hugged him. Hannibal had cried on her other shoulder last week. She feels damp.

She realises she can see Will just inside the next room and waves frantically at him. Will smiles his excuses at the group he leaves and walks over to join them, slowly grinning too. 'What's going on?' 'Oh nothing' said Bev 'We're just being intimidated by..' she grins a lot, a whole shit eating grin 'What a big shot Dr Lecter is.'

There is moment of quiet between them. They are all trying to second guess where Will's head is, but he smiles And then, as one, the four of them crack up and start to laugh, loudly, so loudly other guests stare and crane their necks to see.

....

The party is amazing. Jimmy is in a corner with a dapper bearded man who seems to be yet another psychiatrist, one of the ones from the bar maybe? After the Rocky Horror Show?. Alana Bloom is there with what seems to be her girlfriend. Where Alana is a little shy about the whole relationship, her girlfriend Margot is not. Even so Margot eyes Bev up when they are introduced and Bev notes it in her mental Rolodex of potential 'new friends to play with',

Zeller seemed to be having an in depth conversation with a glamorous woman who is some kind of opera buff. It turns out she knows Zeller's father. From some board or other, Zeller always tried to hide his rather posh Jewish pants himself roots, but tough. Jack is there, Bella too, and though she is looking tired, she still looks beautiful a fine counterpart to Jack's robustness.

There are people from the Opera and the orchestra, the main museums, art galleries and so on. The great and the good of Baltimore. There are some medical types too. And some rather quiet couples who it transpire owned restaurants and food boutiques throughout the city. Even Tonio and Julia from near the cabin have made the trip. Hannibal has a diverse range of acquaintances.

Will wanders through it all. Normally this is some where about zero on his list of things to do. But he knows how much Hannibal had wanted him to attend and here he is. They'd previously talked about it a lot. He isn't sure if that still holds true but he'd decided to risk it. He probably couldn't make anything between them any worse.

He took a beta blocker earlier in the day - trying them to counter his migraines, though his doctor said it might take the edge of his empathy too. The doctor is right and he feels relatively placid. A major, major difference for him. He feels like he is sailing on calm waters rather than caught up in the storm of too many emotions and degrees of well, everything.. it is almost ok.

He chats to a few people he's met with Hannibal. It is surprising how it all adds up, a couple from a dinner the Franks, another from a charity auction, a sommelier from a vineyard they'd been to. And so on. He realises how many things he and Hannibal have gone to, done together. That probably a number of people here think of him and Hannibal as a couple. Just as Hannibal had said.

There is no one with whom he is especially friendly in Hannibal's set, Alana excepted, which makes him glad the sassy science gang have all shown up. But he also doesn't feel too out of place either. It is, he searches for the word 'nice'. He smiles into his glass. It is mainly water but he's added a drop of colouring so it looks like a spirit. Alcohol and meds don't mix, his doctor had reminded him ten minutes ago when they were talking in the living room. He knows Hannibal too. Fair enough.

He lazily watches Hannibal detach himself from the group he has been holding court in. He comes to stand by Will's side. It is the first time they've spoken that evening 'Will, are you well?', Will smiles and leans up and kisses Hannibal gently, one hand resting on the side of his face, loving. Hannibal freezes. Conflicted. He is utterly taken aback, both quietly delighted and utterly afraid. Will has never been especially demonstrative in public, even before. In private it is a different matter, but with the events of the last two weeks hanging over them Hannibal has not anticipated this.

Nor has he anticipated his own response. He had expected seeing Will to hurt, and hurt badly. When he had heard the science team laugh together he had been dismayed to see Will in the group, laughing too. But he has also had regular updates from both Beverly and Alana. He knows Will has been in deep pain too, suffering.

So it has come to this, here, surrounded by maybe a hundred or so people, Will has kissed him. Hannibal takes Will's hand, kisses the palm and then strokes the side of Will's face. Will just smiles again, and then looks so happy, and relieved. Another wall crumbles in Hannibal's defences and he recognises that this thing with Will has jumped all the tracks he had originally laid down for his own life. That the hurt of the last few weeks are not worth hanging on to if they could just be clear now.

Hannibal is dragged off to arbitrate in a discussion about early Tenebrism. Of course he is. Will doesn't mind. It is Hannibal's Party, the host always has to work for his guest's entertainment. Will smiles him a temporary goodbye.

Having failed in some flirtation with Alana and her girlfriend Bev comes over to join Will. For a few moments they stand side by side and looked out across the room.

'Sorry about earlier' 'no, no, it was fine. funny. Very funny. I sort of explained to Hannibal about the whole shot business. I'm not sure he got it. I think he might be either perturbed he didn't get it straight off, or slightly insulted. So I've left it. You know?'

'Rude!' They both say together and laugh again.

"You look happy Will, is it ok?'

He nodded 'yes I think so'

'that's a good thing.'

'Yeah, it is'

Bev smiles at him some more 'look I know we all laughed, but you know we're all a bit jealous too? right? And frankly I'm fucking relieved. Christmas would've been shit you know?'

Will smiles and nods. Glad to be on the inside of a joke for once.

'Can I just say though' as she looks around her, 'not at all jealous of the weird antler Christmas tree thing'.

The party is the kind that people talk about for years afterwards. The food, the ambiance, the music, the people. Sometime around two in the morning enough wine had been imbibed that someone (definitely Jimmy it was later claimed) persuades the quartet to do classical karaoke. It is a surprising hit, and a number of bathroom baritones and shower head sopranos enhance their reputations that evening. A few even try duets or bits of chorus in four parts.

This turns into a group sing of some of the easy bits of Handel's messiah. It turns out Jack is a rather good bass and Jimmy a not shabby tenor. Who knew?

In one of the other rooms there is some kind of art game going on where someone who is blindfolded has to guess the manner, style and media and if possible artist of different paintings and sculptures from a range of glossy art books just from description alone. Zeller is very good at the descriptions. And some of the art group clearly think that Zeller is very good too. There is a small domestic incident about that which does Zeller's ego no end of good.

In the kitchen Hannibal seems to be teaching a select group the egg or potato trick. They'd started on one but turned to the other when every egg in the house had been impaled. Will could foresee a high intake of omelette in his near future. He grins to himself about the possibility of egg based jokes until Hannibal has had un oeuf. He'd have to get that one in before Hannibal did. He smiles to himself, imagining the warm intimacy they had shared so easily, well not always easily. Hannibal could be tricksy sometimes. And he knew he was nearly impossible. But he'd missed it so much over the last fortnight. Painfully much. He tries not to watch Hannibal too much. It still hurts, just a little. Though he thinks it might be ok. God he hopes so.

In the end the eggs became morning breakfast as the party just keeps going. Dancing starts. A few passionate embraces are discreetly relocated to rooms down stairs or outdoors or anywhere that isn't Hannibal's bed room or upstairs studio.

Fortunately it is Will who does the relocating and it isn't Hannibal who'd finds the string quartet holding a little impromptu mutual applause on top of Hannibal's enormous bed. Hannibal might have been furious, Will is simply amused and kind, especially to the viola player who might be a little out of her depth. He sits down on the edge of the bed, just to rest for a moment. He smiles to himself. A good party.

He looks around the room. He has never been in here before. It is a good size. The bed is comfortable. He knows that Hannibal favours the right hand side as you face it. That's good, he likes the left. He smiles at himself. He realises that he's been acting as a sort of co-host, doing all the less glamorous bits. At least, he'd fitted into a role that others seem to think is his. He is glad he'd been brave enough to kiss Hannibal. He really hopes that this is a good enough start. He faintly wonders if he'll sleep in this bed tonight. Or maybe not sleep.

He goes downstairs and then helps Jack find a place for Bella to lie down which involves her eventually sleeping on a bed in the guest room he used to use. He doesn't miss Jack's glance round the room taking in some of Will's usual clothes across a chair, and a book of his on the nightstand, the contents of pockets on the dressing table. He's stayed here A few times. After meals, after various incidents. After the whole weird mountain thing.

Will has no idea if Jack knows about what has happened in Will's relationship with Hannibal over the last two weeks, he might be the head of the BAU but he might also choose to ignore something that doesn't serve any particular focus or interest that Jack is currently wading through.

Will and Hannibal have always kept it professional when in the field or at a meeting together. The events of the Tarot case had been an exception for both of them. He knows Bev has worked hard to get things back onto an even keel. Will wonders if he and Hannibal owe her something big. Like to best woman or something. Will catches himself. He hasn't even slept with Hannibal (except in his head, he's done that a lot in his head) and here he is...imagining them being married. It isn't hard to do. Despite the last two weeks. Maybe because of the last two weeks.

Will looks around the bedroom, smiling at Bella, and Jack settling in to sit beside her for a bit 'she'll nap for about forty minutes or so then we'll either be off or I think breakfast is looming.'

Will thinks breakfast is very likely. It is past five and no one has left the party for the last two hours at least. It is too damn good. Will slightly wonders how Hannibal will be at the end. Exhausted, triumphant, bothered by some small thing that hadn't quite worked out as he had intended? He notices just the faintest trace of concern as he thinks about it and quickly palms another couple of tablets, dry swallowing his contentment. They last for about six hours - that is pretty good.

Jack and Bella both settled, Will makes his way back downstairs. Price and his psychiatrist are still talking, they've narrowed the distance between them by about an inch every hour of the party. Pretty soon they'd be sitting in each other's lap. Will faintly wonders how they've managed to drink and eat as neither of them seemed to have moved.

Zeller he sees is now sitting on the knee of a rather buff young man who seems to be the opera lady's escort. She is sitting on his other knee. That is going to be worth remembering next time Zeller gives him a modestly hard time.

Alana and Margot are also engaged in some complicated conversation which involves another rather intense looking young woman - ahh the viola player from earlier, maybe this is more her cup of tea. Looking around he sees that the piano is now being played by one of the deli owners that Hannibal particularly likes and that his wife is singing jazz numbers extempore with him.

In the distance though he can hear the harpsichord in the conservatory being played and he quietly prays it is someone who knows what they were doing and that no one has rested a wine glass on the lid. He sticks his head round the door just to be sure that all is well. One of the conservatoire singers glance round as he comes in 'oooh Will, do you know if Hannibal has that libretto we were singing at the end of last season?' Will finds it for her on the nearby bookcase, and she and several others crowd round as they began to sing together with harpsichord accompaniment.

At the other end of the conservatory he finds a small group huddled round two chess players determinedly, grimly fighting it out. Will thinks he can see the realisation of zugzwang ripple through the group after a series of particularly inelegant moves from one of the players. In the library he checks no one is watching and goes for the copy of Alice. There is a note inside,

#dear Will, I have to believe it will all be alright. I expect you are very miserable. Hannibal is. He's also doing that thing where he withdraws and goes quiet and won't talk about it. You

might need to be the brave one. I still believe you will come to the cabin for new year. I still believe in you both. I love Hannibal, and of course I love you too. With much hope for a Merry Christmas. Love Mischa#

So, he takes a deep breath and smiles, jazz, baroque chorale music, chess, cookery lessons, serious making out and outrageous flirtation, conversation, art games. A ridiculous party. In the distance he hears the sound of a brief shriek coming from the kitchen. Hmm not so good. He puts down his glass - on a coaster, he isn't stupid - and speeds towards the kitchen - ahh not anything to worry about, the group had moved on to creating banana flambé, breakfast is also going to be ridiculous if the sheer volume of food and serving dishes in the warmers are any indication.

One of the hired staff is carrying plates and dishes into the dining room. Will follows her. 'Are you alright? Do you need any more help? I'm sure you weren't meant to stay the whole night' 'oh no it's fine Dr Lecter is paying us double time after midnight and treble time after four! If we go over 24 hours I think he'll give us enough to start our own business' she pauses 'each' Will laughingly agrees but still helps her stack plates along the side board and sets out warming trays along the dining table.

There is a small discussion about how many clean napkins there still are. And whether it could possibly be acceptable to use paper ones instead. Will is pretty sure Hannibal doesn't have any paper napkins at all. He and the caterer estimate there is about half an hour to go before breakfast preparation begins in earnest so maybe an hour until first servings - enough time to do a quick run of the machine and twenty minutes to dry, or iron dry.

Once they agree this there is then an intense competition between all the servers to collect as many scattered napkins from around the house as possible. Will throws them into a washing machine, puts it on the fast wash and the group of them breathe through the conspiracy of napkin silence as the machine does its work.

One of the younger servers, no, the doorman, says with something like awe 'I've never been to a house party where the host had more than a hundred linen napkins. Never' between the five of them with Will helping they wash dry and iron 131 napkins within 55 minutes.

They are on the side board next to the cutlery before a triumphant procession emerges from the kitchen with a wide range of covered dishes and bowls. Out in the hall a minion had been dispatched to announce breakfast and people emerge from all over the house.

For the next forty minutes about 70 people demolish the breakfast buffet, use all the napkins and eventually sated by offerings of coffee and tea the doorman finally starts to dispatch people with the correct coats and keys and cars and usually partners.

The departing combinations hold their own mythic value for a number of years. So many people clasp Will by the hand or clap him on the back or kiss him that he feels almost dizzy with all the good will, never mind the medication. When the last few people have left Will checks on Bella and Jack, they are both fast asleep on the guest bed. He smiles and pulls a blanket over Jack's body. He can be benevolent today. And then he sets the alarm beside the bed to go off in a few more hours.

He finds a few stray party goers as he goes round the house picking up glasses and napkins (ah, so, closer to 200 of them after all) dispatching them after helping them to coats and promises that they could come next year.

Eventually it was just the staff and Will left. In the kitchen they are washing up the crystal. They'd got instructions to stack everything and as three of them are veterans of previous Christmas parties at Dr Lecter's it looks like this will go off without a hitch. Will makes himself a cup of tea and goes to find Hannibal.

Hannibal is in the small library. He is flipping through a series of sketches clearly done by people during the evening - mostly of other guests or objets from around the house. One or two of them done in caricature style are especially good if a bit sharp.

Hannibal's hand stills when he finds one of Will head bent to talk to one of the older women guests. The drawing has captured his kindness and interest in what the elderly woman is saying, and has captured her liveliness and birdlike qualities. Hannibal thinks he might frame it. He is torn between giving it to the friend, who was a mentor to him at Johns Hopkins as she'd be delighted by her depiction, or keeping it himself for some private album.

He looks up to see Will smiling at him from where he is leaning against the ladder. Ahh, the real thing is even better. "Hello Will", "Hello Hannibal".

And they were not divided

Chapter Summary

Finally Will and Hannibal get it right.

NSFW - you read that tag, right?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal moves closer to Will, reaches out his hand and gently strokes his face. They lean into each other, fitting themselves together. Hannibal noses at Will, just at the corner of his jaw, his lips almost brushing Will. Will laughs and rubs his stubbled cheek up against Hannibal's face. They each ghost their lips over each other's face, sometimes touching, just barely grazing. And then kissing. Just tentatively, like a memory. Putting back together how it had been before. Kintsukoroi. Gold mending their fractures. Remembering. They've always been good at this part.

They gradually pull their mouths over each other's, brushing, making a connection. Will's breath hitches and he opens his mouth slightly moistening his lips. Hannibal moans, just a breath, deep, resonant, vibrating through them both. He pushs into Will's mouth, exploring everywhere, finding Will out in the warm dark with his tongue. He moves his hand to the nape of Will's neck pulling them closer.

Will put his arms tighter round Hannibal's back, Hannibal's hand spreading to cover all of Will's lower back, holding them close. They move against each other, just a slow, tortuous grind and press. Their full lengths. Will can feel heat unfurling and uncurling at the base of his spine, tingling in his balls. He can feel his cock thicken. He wants to taste Hannibal. He recalls the desperate kiss they had shared on Hannibal's doorstep, could remember the feel of their cocks lined up, with cotton and wool between them. And how much he wants him.

Their mouths range, seek each part of the other. Catching each other's lips, a playful nip, a tug between teeth, a lick, a brush. Deep, erotic, moving and discovering. Breathless and delighted they pull apart just slightly. Laugh, again. Oh that they can laugh.

'More?' asks Will

'Yes' says Hannibal, he kisses the corner of Will's mouth and then down his throat, pushing Will's head back, supporting him at the waist so he can lean down into him. A mutual giving and taking.

Will is moaning louder now 'please, please....oh god... Hannibal. I've missed you, I've missed you so much, I'm sorry, so sorry, ohh' he leans up to kiss hard into Hannibal's mouth, licking

his way in, holding their heads so they can each taste and take fully. Hannibal lets himself be manoeuvred, undone by the sensation of being wanted, of wanting and receiving, willing to let himself go into Will's increasing ardour.

Will is stroking his hair, pushing Hannibal's fringe to the side, still kissing him deeply, cupping his chin with one hand. Wanting everything, all at once, but slowly, with time to savour, and with no time except to meet each other's longing.

Breathlessly they pull apart again

'Do we need to talk about the last two weeks?'

'Yes. But not now. Kiss me again.'

Hannibal kisses him again, and slowly takes Will's jacket off, just sliding it off over his shoulders, holding it as he runs his hands down Will's arms taking the coat with them. They stay connected by lips and hands whilst Will struggles with Hannibal's jacket and waistcoat.

'Why are you still wearing a tie? Take it off, take it off. Too many layers, always too many layers, too many buttons.'

Now just cotton between their torsos they spent some minutes stroking and touching. Will marvelling at the muscles of Hannibal's back that he could feel shifting as they move over each other. More developed than he'd remembered or first expected from a sedentary psychiatrist.

'Ohhhhhh, don't stop doing that. Fuck. Oh.'

Hannibal pushes his thigh between Will's legs to increase pressure, to give Will something to push against. Will grabs Hannibal's arse. Feeling him firm and full. He squeezes. Trying not to leave bruises. He can imagine running his face against the soft fuzz he anticipates finding there.

'God, trousers, trousers, now' he fumbles with the buttons on Hannibal's dress pants. 'God, buttons here too. Who has buttons? What's wrong with a zip? I'm going to get you Velcro pants'

'Are you trying to deter me?'

'You love it when I ohhhhh, that, do that again, ohh fucking...'

'Upstairs. Will. Before. Upstairs. Bedroom. Will, please.'

Somehow they get out of the small library, across the hall and up the broad staircase of Hannibal's house. Pulling at each other, trying to undo the buttons on each other's shirts.

'Cuff links! For fucks sake? You still have cufflinks. No. shut up. Kiss me again'

They stop on the small landing Hannibal crowding Will against the wall, grinding against him, kissing him with greater abandon than before.

At the top of the stairs they are confronted by a sleepy Jack just emerging from the guest room with Bella.

It is one of those crystal clear moments where both Will and Jack try to mentally be anywhere other than where they are physically. Will effectively hiding behind a partially disrobed Hannibal. Bella simply laughs. All three men look at her. And then chuckle too.

Hannibal pulls his shirt back on properly, and refastens his trousers.

'Come, I will call a car for you.' Will pretends to be invisible as Jack goes past, from the very corner of his eye he can just see Jack narrow his eyes at him, although he isn't really looking at Will. There will be words about this later. Just maybe. Bella pats his cheek 'good luck Will, have a lovely morning' she smirks at him and winks and lets Jack help her down the stairs. Will doesn't know which reaction is worse. He burns.

Will pulls open the door to Hannibal's bedroom and sits on the edge of the bed. He smiles as he thinks back to a few hours earlier. God. He is glad he is here. He hasn't screwed it up. He undoes his shirt buttons completely and takes off his belt and socks. There is never a sexy way to take off socks. He palms himself through his trousers.

It feels as though the last 6 months have all been foreplay. Exasperating, edging, so close, and both unfulfilling and so rich in promise, and sensuality. He thinks of Hannibal saying the words, and his cock throbs hard. Will feels himself flush. He wonders what Hannibal likes, what he is like as a lover, what he will like with Will, from him.

Will is almost desperate to get Hannibal's clothes off, just running his hands over his torso has made his mouth water. As they'd come up the stairs Hannibal's shirt coming undone, parting, he'd realised Hannibal had a good amount of chest hair. Somehow that was unexpected. But god. Fantastic. Will palms himself again and then unbuttons and unzips his fly, just gently stroking himself. Imagining it is Hannibal's hand.

How had they not got this far before? Why had either of them held back? He thinks of the interruptions, the alcohol, his own stubbornness, his own obliviousness, Hannibal's hurt pride and woundedness, his own fear, his anxiety. Not this time. Surely, not this time. He strokes himself harder, all the way along his length, he can feel his boxers dampening. He lets his mouth open slightly, breathing steadily. He thinks of Hannibal taking his cock in his mouth, and that sends a jolt straight through him and a wave of desperate heat. He takes a deep breath and shudders. His cock hardening and thickening impossibly further. He moans.

He opens his eyes and sees Hannibal standing in the doorway watching him 'are you participating or merely observing?' He sasses. Hannibal growls and Will makes a sort of whining noise in the back of his throat. He stands up, aching, and pulls Hannibal closer, by his belt. He undoes it. Shaking, and then thumbs open the buttons on his dress pants again. Reaching down he shucks of Hannibal's trousers. He looks at Hannibal's cock sheathed within his shorts. They are made of some sort of clinging knitted fabric with a dark sheen. They make him look huge, all shadows and highlight. Will's mouth fills with saliva.

'Can I. Can I, I want to taste you?' Hannibal pushes a hand through Wills hair, hardly able to breathe, 'please' he whispers. Will smoothes the shorts down Hannibal's thighs. They tremble

under his hands.

'Oh.. god. Fuck... you are so beautiful' Will drops to the floor and mouths around the base of Hannibal's cock. He licks up his full length. Hannibal groans, he closes his eyes, one hand resting on Will's shoulder to steady himself, the other stroking through Will's hair. 'You taste perfect' salty, umami, Will licks round the head and uses one hand to pull Hannibal's foreskin down and then up, not roughly, but still a firm grip. Hannibal shudders. Will sucks, just at the tip. And then, with no warning takes Hannibal fully into this mouth.

Hannibal is almost instantly undone. The glorious wet warmth of Wills mouth, surrounding him. This is more than he could have imagined. How could he have thought it over between them, wounded, hurt, not worth the pain. This is worth everything. Will is worth everything. Will sucks hard, and then pulls Hannibal right into the back of his throat and swallows around him. Hannibal jerks uncontrollably. Wordlessly he sways. Clutches at Will's shoulders. He thinks he will come without much more..

'Will, Will, oh. This. I've wanted you so much, so..'

'You're gorgeous like this. But you're close aren't you?'

'Yes..... I feel.... I. .. Overcome'

'Good, that's how I want you to be. I love you like this. Undoing you' he sucks him again. He can feel Hannibal tense again.

'I'm not going to finish you.' Will's voice lowers, 'I want you to fuck me. With this beautiful cock. Will you?'

Hannibal doesn't answer him just pushes him onto the bed face down. Will scrambles half up the covers as Hannibal climbs over him. Will turns his head and they are kissing again as one of Hannibal's hands reach round to Wills cock and tug up and down his whole length. Hannibal reaches up beyond Will, still kissing, and opens a drawer beside the bed. He start to kiss down Will's back. Holding him on either side to stop Will from wiggling too much. Will is desperate for some friction as his cock leaks onto the bed cover.

Hannibal kisses at the base of Will's spine, and before Will had even computed what is about to happen Hannibal has licked long broad strokes across his hole. Will Keene. Hannibal pulls his cheeks apart and licks firmly, purposefully. Will begins to come apart completely, whining, begging, melting as Hannibal licks around the rim and then darts his tongue in and out. Will writhes. Loving the feel of it, the heat. He mewles. Desperate for more, but not wanting this to stop. When he is sopping wet he hears a lid pop and realises Hannibal is warming some lubrication between his fingers.
'Go slow. Go slow. It's been a while for me'

'Has it been too fast. Do you need to sto...'

'fuck no' Will interrupts desperately 'just, I don't know what to '

Hannibal licks him again and Will melts deeper into the bed. Hannibal uses one finger to skirt around the rim of Will's hole, now shiny with spit, pink, and slightly raw looking. He pushes in just with the one finger and lets Will get used to it. He moves his finger around, pushing further. It is tight, so tight. It will be his undoing when he finally enters Will. He pushes his finger all the way into just beyond the second knuckle. Will is panting.

Will moans when Hannibal adds a second finger, stretching him, just keeping his fingers moving, and then he hits the edge of Will's prostate and Will jerks and swears 'fucking shit, Jesus wept, fuck me, god, do that, again..... please' Hannibal holds back through a few twists and stretches and then hits it again 'just fuck me, please fuck me, please, I can't take it, please. Just. Please. Hannibal. Fuck'

He feels Hannibal pull his fingers out, hears the sound of lube being warmed, he turns his head to see Hannibal leaning on the bed half above him looking at his own cock as he spreads lubrication all over himself, slipping and sliding it up his full length. Will closes his eyes.

He feels Hannibal shift above him, then there is a heat and a press, and the kind of pain that you chase, that pursues you, and you welcome. That fills you. Hannibal eases himself forward and deeper. Holding himself up on his arms above Will. Will jerks as Hannibal hits his prostrate again. The clenching of his muscles cause Hannibal to jerk forwards deeper.

And then they are both pushing harder into each other, Will desperately grinding back, Hannibal thrusting himself in as far as he can go at this angle. Will cants his hips slightly to allow Hannibal in further. He pushes himself back and up changing the angle so that Hannibal hits his prostrate nearly every time. He is shouting now. Hannibal is gasping. Sweat is beading along his hair line, and in the hairs on his chest. Catching the light when Will looks round at him.

Will reaches to pull Hannibal closer to him, so that they are thrusting and undulating together, rocking. Harder. Will can just get his hand round his cock. A few hard strokes up and down and he knows he is close.

'Fucking coming soon. Do it. Fucking do it. Come in me. Please. Fuck, Hannibal, please' they can both feel it. That moment when everything tips and then Hannibal stutters and jerks hard and comes in a great burst shuddering and moaning Will's name. Will comes almost immediately in response, hard. Losing the edge of his vision, with a shout.

They take great gulps of air as they both try to breathe through it, holding on to each other, to keep them from falling. Laughing. Grasping. Stroking. Holding. Breathing. Breathing. Breathing. As they come down. Hannibal is almost lying on Will, suffocatingly hot. Will just lies there. Too well fucked to move or care. If he dies now that would be just fine. He can't move.

After a few minutes Hannibal manages to pull them both onto their sides. Hannibal still behind Will, still joined, though he is softening. Will snuggles back into him, to stay connected just a bit longer. Before they have disentangled or wiped themselves up or even said very much they are both asleep. Wound round each other. Entwined. Conjoined.

It's beautiful.

Chapter End Notes

There is something slightly surreal about writing slash smut (about a cannibal serial killer) when you're sharing Christmas afternoon with your ninety year old dad. I think Will might appreciate the incongruity. Hannibal would smile very slightly, just a press of his lips together.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!